

SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

2001-2002 EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Acknowledgments

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EDSTAR included some graphics with most data outcomes, to help clarify and enhance understanding of the data.

If the data represents a ‘snapshot’ of the 2001–2002 participants, we included the following graphic:



If the data compares the SOS program in 2001–2002 with the program in 2000–2001, with possibly different participants, we included the following graphic:



If the data compares 2001–2002 SOS participants to data for them in previous years (longitudinal data for these students), we included the following graphic:



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Executive Summary

Background

The Support Our Students (SOS) initiative is an effort by the state of North Carolina to encourage quality after-school programs for students in both urban and rural communities. Administered by the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, Support Our Students awards grants in the \$60,000–\$250,000 range to non-profit, 501(c)(3) organizations to run quality after-school programs for students, most of whom are in grades 6–8. Now in its ninth year of operation, the state’s Support Our Students initiative was in 99 counties at the beginning of the 2001–2002 school year. (98 counties were evaluated, as one did not provide programming for the entire year.)

From September 2001 to June 2002, SOS programs across North Carolina served 16,833 students at 190 school-based and 54 community-based sites. In addition to serving participants during the school year, 81 counties provided services to a statewide total of approximately 10,000 youngsters during the summer months or when students in year-round schools were tracked out. **In all, nearly 23,000 different students were served.**

Program Motivation and Goals

Young children need adult supervision and guidance. Many of the young adolescents in North Carolina would be alone after school if not for the SOS program or others like it. When young children are alone, they have a tendency to make uninformed or poor decisions. Statistics indicate that most juvenile crime is committed between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., the hours immediately following students’ release from school.ⁱ

In a study of six after-school programs in North Carolina, the majority of study **participants said that attending after-school programs helped them stay**

out of trouble.ⁱⁱ Other studies show that children in after-school programs are two times less likely to use drugs and one third less likely to become teen parents. Teachers and parents report that children who attend after-school programs also develop better social skills and handle conflicts in more acceptable ways.ⁱⁱⁱ Besides providing a safe haven for children, Support Our Students gives them a place where they have opportunities to learn and grow.

The specific goals of the SOS initiative, as outlined in the 1994 Crime Control Prevention Act, are as follows: to reduce juvenile crime, to reduce the number of young people who are unsupervised after school; to improve the academic performance and the attitude and behavior of youth participants; to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of young people; to involve community volunteers; and to improve the coordination of existing resources and enhance collaboration between agencies.^{iv}

Although these goals remained constant, SOS activities varied from county to county and from site to site. SOS sites were given the autonomy to create programs based on what they determined would benefit the students in their community. During the 2001–2002 school year, all of the county programs offered homework assistance; 98% offered tutoring in math and English or reading; and 56% had a mentoring program.

Key Program Statistics

During the 2001–2002 school year, 244 SOS sites in 98 counties were open a total of more than 140,000 hours. During the school year, 942 staff members and nearly 800 volunteers provided services to more than 16,800 students.

The number of sites has increased steadily over the previous years, growing about 10% per year.

Overall, 72% of SOS participants were in middle school (grades 6–8); most of the remaining participants were in elementary schools and a couple programs had transitional programs for 9th graders. The average daily attendance for all 98 counties combined was 8,718 students.

Overview of Major Findings

The following is an overview of the major findings of EDSTAR's evaluation of the SOS program in school year 2001–2002.

Participant Demographics

- SOS programs served approximately the same number of males and females. Student participants came from a variety of racial backgrounds.
- 57% of all SOS participants were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- On days when students were not attending an SOS program, 25% of the elementary school children and 44% of the middle school children were usually not supervised by an adult.

Student Perceptions and Behavior

There were some stunning and very encouraging results of participation in the SOS program. Students reported overwhelmingly that they enjoyed school more, completed more homework, and would recommend the program to a friend.

- On a student survey, 41% of the respondents said that they liked school more than they did before starting the SOS program – roughly *six times* more than those who said they liked school less than they did before joining SOS. More than 70% would recommend the program to a friend.

- **Almost half (47%) of students surveyed said they completed their homework during SOS, but didn't believe they would have completed it if not there.**
- The percentage of middle school SOS participants receiving out-of-school suspensions decreased as compared to their previous year in school (from 13% to 8%), as did the percentage of in-school suspensions.
- Classroom teachers reported that 41% of participants had improved behavior in math class throughout this school year, and 42% had improved behavior in English/Language Arts classes.

Proficiency and Grade Levels

- At the beginning of the year, about a third of participants were *not* proficient in reading at their grade level as measured by the 2001 North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) reading tests.
- At every grade except sixth, SOS participants' mean EOG reading scale-score improvements exceeded the state's improvement goals. The evaluator, State Program Director and several other Practitioners have evaluated this anomaly and are developing ways to rectify it.
- **The percentages of students who scored at grade-level proficiency increased in both reading and math, with the greatest increase in reading—from 67% at grade level to 71%.**
- The SOS programs with the greatest increases in percentages of participants who scored at grade-level proficiency (20% or more increase) on EOG reading tests were in the following counties:
 - McDowell

- Yancey
 - Stanly
 - Camden
 - Alamance
 - Cleveland (38% increase, the highest of all the county programs)
- The SOS programs with the greatest increases in percentages of participants who scored at grade-level proficiency (20% or more increase) on EOG math tests were in the following counties:
 - Cumberland
 - Camden
 - Alexander
 - Northampton
 - Onslow
 - Caswell
 - Bladen (51% increase, the highest of all the county programs)
- **SOS is helping to close the gap between minority and majority student achievement in North Carolina.** Minority SOS participants made significantly greater improvements than White students in both math and reading.
 - African Americans made greater gains in EOG reading scores compared with every other ethnic group. This was statistically significant ($p < .0001$). This was true overall, and when controlling for other factors, such as baseline achievement levels and risk factors.

- **Combining all minority groups and comparing their EOG reading scale-score gains with those of White students showed that minority SOS participants made nearly twice the gains of White students.**
- **Hispanic participants made the greatest gains in EOG math scores, followed by African Americans. These differences were statistically significant ($p < .01$), but not nearly as great as the differences observed in reading scores.**
- The average yearly improvement in EOG scores for students participating in SOS was almost half a proficiency level. More than two thirds of three-year SOS participants have improved two proficiency levels.
- Classroom teachers reported that more than 40% of the regularly attending participants improved their grades in English and/or math.

Financial Information

SOS programs were able to creatively fund their programs, and received a large amount of help from their communities and from outside sources.

- In addition to hiring paid staff, nearly all counties used volunteers. Hiring tutors (at \$15/hour) instead of using volunteers would have cost SOS more than \$1.1 million for the school year. The value of in-kind contributions (donated use of school facilities, transportation, etc.) was estimated to be over \$2.5 million.
- Many counties raised additional operating revenue for their programs. Additionally, 69% of the program directors reported that they used the evaluation reports provided by DJJ for accountability to obtain other funding sources, gathering a total of more than \$4.6 million.

- Statewide, the cost *in SOS dollars* to provide after-school services for one student was \$2.94 per hour. The average program served students at a cost in SOS dollars of \$3.00 per hour, which has decreased by 50¢ per hour each year for the last two years.

Additional Benefits for North Carolina

After eight years of funding, SOS has begun to offer some unexpected benefits to the state. North Carolina's investment in SOS has not only paid its return in academic and social benefits for middle school students, it has also produced a group of experienced service providers whose expertise is now recognized and sought out by other agencies to include the National Association of Practitioners for After School Services. Their expertise has begun to enhance the after-school care system itself in surprising ways.

A prime example of this is the R.J. Reynolds/SOS partnership, which began during 2001–2002 school year. In the spring of 2002, the vice president of public issues of the R.J. Reynolds Company, Stephen Strawsburg, contacted Carole Yardley, executive director of YMCA Community Outreach Services (which includes the Forsyth, Davie, and Stokes SOS programs). In 1993 R.J. Reynolds had developed a “Right Decisions/Right Now” public service program for school guidance counselors. Its goal was to provide schools with materials that could help discourage students from smoking and help them make sound decisions, independent of peer pressure.

R.J. Reynolds had become interested in expanding the program to after-school program sites such as those administered by SOS. Mr. Strawsburg approached Ms. Yardley about the possibility of implementing it at her SOS sites. She reviewed the materials and suggested some revisions and the addition of a staff-training component, to make the program appropriate and effective for use in an after-school curriculum. Ms. Yardley approached the SOS Standards and

Procedures Board and found several county directors who were interested in reviewing and revising “Right Decisions/Right Now” materials. At the suggestion of the R.J. Reynolds administrator, she submitted a proposal for funding to review, revise, and evaluate these materials to ready them for use in after-school programs on a statewide, and potentially nationwide, basis.

R.J. Reynolds funded the initial phases of the proposal for \$19,500, with subsequent phases to be considered for funding as the initial phases are completed. Under the leadership of Ms. Yardley, SOS directors from 10 counties have reviewed and revised the curriculum materials and developed appropriate staff-training materials. At the beginning of the 2002–2003 school year, selected members of the task force will provide this newly developed training to SOS staff in the 10 counties, and the new curriculum and materials will be tested with SOS students at these sites during the 2002–2003 school year.

This joint program not only represents a valuable corporate–public sector partnership, but its curriculum introduces the concept of “asset building” as the foundation of the materials. Tentatively entitled “Youth at Promise” (as opposed to youth at risk), the new curriculum will be a brief, concise enrichment program that addresses such topics as values, responsibility, decision making, peer pressure, conflict resolution, parental involvement, and community service. Each topic will have activities designed to help the students build "assets" in each of these subject areas. An outcome-based evaluation has been proposed as part of the initial implementation phase using a pre- and post-test Developmental Asset Evaluation and control groups in each test county.

The SOS task force’s proposal to R.J. Reynolds included a total of five phases, the first two of which have been approved and are being implemented as described. Subsequent phases will involve final revisions to the program materials, training of SOS providers in all 100 counties, and eventually expansion

of the program to major youth-serving organizations in North Carolina. R.J. Reynolds would provide free materials to the service providers and fund the task force to provide the necessary training.

Overview of Evaluation

Goals and Methodology

This evaluation is designed to accomplish three primary goals: 1) Describe who was served and how they benefited from services; 2) Identify practices that resulted in desired outcomes for children; and 3) Provide information that can be used to improve programs.

To accomplish these goals, evaluators analyzed a variety of data, including demographic descriptions of participants, school absences, academic outcomes, standardized North Carolina End-of-Grade achievement test scores and survey data.

All of the data in this report are for 2001–2002 participants. Data labeled for prior years are comparison data for the same students in prior years – not data for SOS programs in prior years. More detailed information on how SOS programs performed in prior years can be found in the Support Our Students Evaluation Reports for 1998–1999, 1999–2000, and 2000–2001 at www.edstar.org/reports.html.

Evaluators gathered information on the structures of various SOS programs and the implementation of curricula by interviewing and surveying the 98 county program directors.^v Both the telephone interviews and the Web-based surveys were completed in the spring of 2002. The surveys and interviews helped evaluators identify the specific activities offered by each county program as well as the hours of operation and average daily attendance at all the sites. Also, the evaluation team collected information regarding volunteers and the degree to which each program succeeded in securing other grants and assistance from collaborating agencies.

The evaluators also surveyed the SOS students. From this survey, the evaluators learned what SOS participants valued most in an after-school program, as well as students' perceptions of their specific SOS programs and staff.

Rationale for the SOS Program

In many communities across the nation, parents have an urgent need for quality after-school programs.

Adult Supervision

Today's increasing number of two-income families and single-parent

Homework and tutoring for students has been a great success; grades are improving. Teachers at the school are communicating with the counselors daily. The program was included in a local TV program as community resource. – Caldwell County SOS

Two of our students received the first good report card of their lives; another made the A-B honor roll for the first time. – Alexander County SOS

[An] eighth grade girl was recommended to SOS last semester because of Ds and Fs on her report card and problems with self-esteem, lack of friends, etc. This grading period found her on the A-B honor roll! -- Rockingham County SOS

families has resulted in fewer parents at home between the end of the school day and the early evening, between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. As previously noted, during this unsupervised period of time, a large number of pre-teens and teenagers are involved in delinquent acts, or are victims of criminal acts. An analysis of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System revealed that violent crimes by juveniles crest

between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., a peak that occurred on school days only.^{vi}

According to the United States Department of Education, as many as 28 million children have parents who work outside the home.^{vii} In 69% of all married-couple families with children ages 6–17, both parents work outside the

home; in 79% of single-mother families and 85% of single-father families with children ages 6–17, the custodial parent is working.^{viii} This can leave a large gap between parents' work schedules and their children's school schedules.

In a survey of SOS participants, EDSTAR found that on days when students were not attending an SOS program, approximately 13% of program participants rarely or never had adult supervision after school, and 23% had supervision only sometimes. Thirty-seven percent of the students who usually did not have adult supervision after school typically attended SOS at least five days per week. Forty-four percent attended four days per week.

Supervision occurred less frequently for middle school students than it did for elementary school students. On days when students were not attending an SOS program, 26% of elementary school children and 41% of middle school children usually were not supervised by an adult.

Over the years, psychologists, criminologists, educators, and others have learned many lessons about leaving children unsupervised and vulnerable. For example, an American Psychological Association study showed that eighth grade students who care for themselves 11 or more hours a week are at twice the risk of substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana) as are those who are

supervised after school.^{ix}

[A student] had serious behavior problems for previous years before enrolling in SOS. After spending time in our program, he was recognized as the most improved student in the fifth grade at a Northampton County Board meeting. He still is showing this improvement at middle school. SOS reached this child before it was too late. – Northampton County SOS

In North Carolina, the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveyed 2,227 middle school students and found that over half these boys and girls had consumed alcohol,

53% had smoked cigarettes, 17% had smoked marijuana, 25% had considered suicide, and 10% had attempted suicide. At least 20% of the boys in the survey had access to a gun.^x

These percentages are even higher for high school students. However, research indicates that the best way to prevent at-risk, high-school-age youths from committing delinquent acts or dropping out of school is to address problems at the elementary or middle school level.^{xi}

Academic Assistance

Recent studies have noted the positive effect after-school programs have on grades and behavior of participants. In one study, researchers attributed participants' improved test scores to program activities designed to build their self-esteem.^{xii} The most effective ways to influence at-risk middle school students is individualized assistance with academic skills, leadership-building experiences, and one-on-one counseling to build self-esteem and achieve success in school. Field trips and cooperative recreational activities also help improve social skills.

Many SOS participants benefit not only from after-school supervision, but also from the academic support they receive. Studies in various parts of the country have found positive effects of after-school programs on participants' grades. The recent legislation that requires students to pass the North Carolina EOG tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 underscores the need for academic support and tutoring for students. Most SOS programs provide one-on-one tutoring and teach students good study habits.

Description of Participants

Overall, SOS programs served approximately the same number of males and females. The majority of participants were in grades 6-8.

About a third of the students were registered for services five days per week, and about half the program participants were registered to attend SOS sessions four days per week. Only 15% of the participants were scheduled to attend SOS for fewer than four days per week.

Racial Diversity

The following chart shows that the program served a racially diverse group of students.

[Another copy of this will be forwarded with the link]

Socio-Economic Diversity

About 57% of SOS participants were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. However, in 60% of the counties, more than two thirds of participants were eligible. The following table shows the socio-economic diversity for SOS participants across counties.





STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM – SNAPSHOT

Percentage of SOS participants who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	Number of Counties
0%–20%	0
21%–40%	11
41%–60%	22
61%–80%	35
81%–100%	30

Home Living Situation

The percentage of SOS participants who lived in single- and two-parent households varied from county to county as well. Overall, 39% of the participants lived in single-parent households. Two counties—Graham and Yancey—had 80% or more of students living in two-parent households; 11 counties had 20% or less students living in two-parent households.



STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM – SNAPSHOT

Percentage of SOS participants living with both parents	Number of Counties
0%–20%	11
21%–40%	45
41%–60%	32
61%–80%	8
81%–100%	2

Academic Attributes of Participants and Their Parents

Two thirds of all North Carolina SOS participants were reading at or above grade level at the beginning of the 2001–2002 school year (as measured by the 2001 North Carolina EOG reading tests).

Across counties, the academic achievement levels of SOS participants varied greatly, as the following table illustrates.



Percentage of SOS participants who were reading <i>below</i> grade level before the 2001 – 2002 school year	Percentages of Counties
0%–20%	16%
21%–40%	48%
41%–60%	30%
61%–80%	6%
81%–100%	0%

Overall, 37% of the participants' parents had formal education beyond high school; 51% of parents were high school graduates; and 11% did not finish high school. Parents' education varied from county to county.

About 18% of the students had a learning disability or an emotional or physical handicap, and 8% were gifted.

Program Goals and Structure

All county program directors sought to achieve the overall goals of the SOS program as outlined in the 1994 Crime Control Prevention Act, but directors

If students misbehaved, "Peer Court" would decide what their consequences would be. This method worked well, as any student could be assigned to Peer Court. When students have been, or know they could be, in a position of authority, they tend to behave better, knowing they need to set a good example. Well-behaved students were rewarded with tickets to sports and cultural events. – Mecklenburg County SOS

differed on what they stressed and how they chose to accomplish the goals.

Although all of the programs sought to improve academic performance and provide a safe, drug-free environment, many counties also sought to modify students' behavior and self-esteem through behavior modification programs, one-on-one mentoring, pregnancy prevention programs, drug

and alcohol awareness programs, conflict resolution discussion groups, career skills seminars, and special activities designed to improve social skills and leadership skills. Also, some counties expanded their goals to provide hot meals, health education, cultural awareness, avenues for community service, and other enrichment activities.

Program Characteristics

The size of county SOS programs ranged from over 1,000 students served (in both Durham and Orange Counties) to about 50 students served (in each of 10 rural counties). The number of sites also varied from county to county; 43% of counties had just one site, while three counties (Durham, Wake, and Wilkes) had 10 or 11 sites.

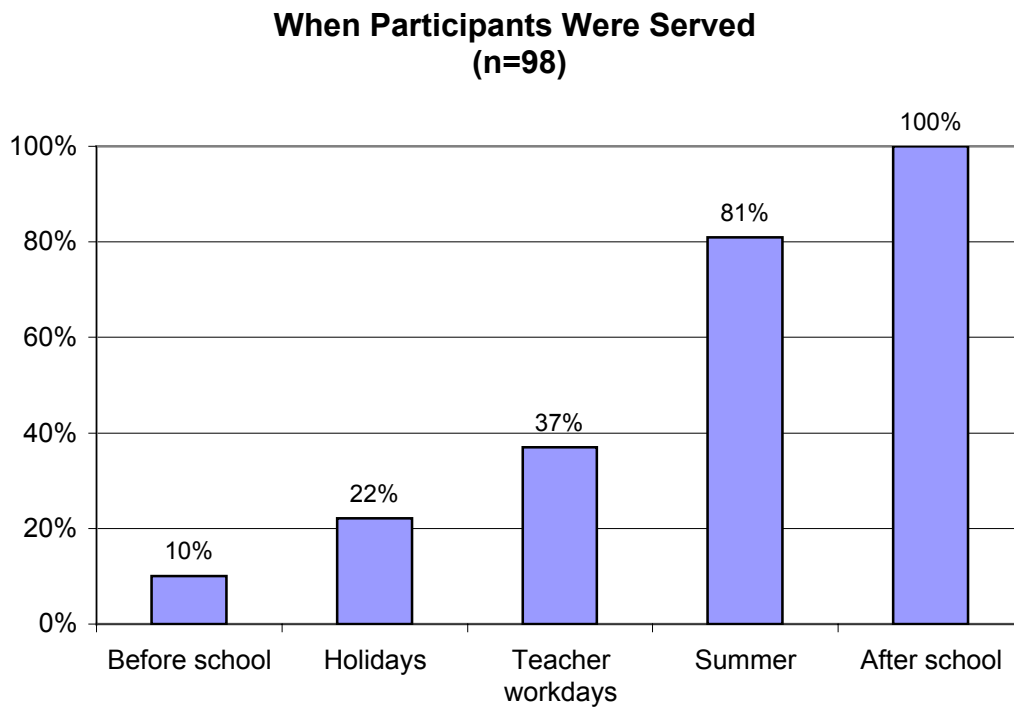
Number of Sites	Number of Counties
1	43
2	26
3–4	16
5–8	8
9–11	5

About two thirds (64%) of the participants attended the program at least 30 days, and were therefore considered “regular attendees.” Students who attended fewer days were not expected to have measurable outcomes that could be attributed to the program. In 19 counties, more than 90% of the participants were regular attendees.

Most of the counties had specific attendance requirements and served only regular attendees. Programs used incentives such as SOS bucks and field trips to encourage students to attend as often as possible. Most of the students were enrolled four or five days per week.

Most sites (190) were on school campuses, while 54 were located outside the schools yet linked closely to the schools. These community-based sites were in Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, a YWCA, various 4-H Cooperative Extension facilities, community centers, recreation centers, resource centers, learning centers, churches, a religious-based outreach center, a housing authority building, and a childcare center. School-campus sites often had a ready supply of teachers who could serve as tutors, access to computers and audio/video equipment, plenty of desks, and fewer transportation issues. On the other hand, some community-based sites could offer more diverse recreational opportunities, such as swimming and table tennis.

All of the programs served participants after school or in the evening. In addition, some counties served participants at other times. The following chart shows the percentages of counties that served children at times other than after school on school days.



Some county SOS programs offered services more days and hours than did others. Statewide, 244 SOS sites in 98 counties were open a total of more than 140,000 hours. **The number of sites has increased steadily over the previous years, growing at about 10% per year.**

In addition to serving participants during the school year, 81 counties provided services to a statewide total of approximately 10,000 youngsters during

the summer months or when students in year-round schools were tracked out. In all, nearly 23,000 different students were served.

Referral to SOS

The majority of students were enrolled in the program by their parent(s) or guardian. In some cases, school staff knew of students who would benefit and referred them to the program. Almost 20% of participants referred themselves. The following chart shows how students learned of the program and became involved.

[Another copy of this will be forwarded with the link]

Curriculum and Activities

According to a report on after-school programs by the U. S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, good after-school programs include a variety of enriching activities that complement the school day.^{xiii} SOS programs sought to achieve their goals through a variety of activities, including homework assistance, one-on-one tutoring, mentors, computer use, mini-courses on a variety of life-skills topics, games, field trips, and other activities. The following table shows the percentages of the 98 counties that provided each activity for participants, and when appropriate the response by SOS students surveyed about what activities they think are most important in an after-school program such as SOS.




Percentage of Counties Offering Each Activity, and Student Survey Response		
Activity	% Offering	Students Indicated This Is Important
Homework assistance	100%	29%
Tutoring in math or science	98%	71%
Tutoring in English or reading	98%	42%
Field trips	98%	65%
Sports	97%	52%
Arts and crafts	94%	24%
Games	91%	47%
Community service	89%	75%
Computers	86%	70%
Clubs	77%	54%
Life skills	74%	0%
Anger management, conflict resolution, or violence prevention	63%	0%
Television or videos	57%	58%
Mentors	56%	0%
Nutrition education	51%	0%
Other*	39%	0%

*Other activities included guest speakers, career awareness, counseling, and cultural events.

Still other activities included golf lessons, gymnastic lessons, chorale, health education, career exploration, teen court, a Young Entrepreneur Program, teen discussion groups, quilting, and fabric art, as well as African cultural dance, song, and mask making. Classes included pregnancy prevention, drug and alcohol prevention, character development, dance, diversity training, global awareness, African drumming, cooking, martial arts, drill team, relaxation/stress management, team building, and leadership. Some students also used the time in SOS to take makeup tests, visit the school library, practice band instruments,

participate in parades, entertain at local festivals and functions, and be tutored in Spanish, computers, and a variety of school subjects.

In the EDSTAR student survey, when program participants were asked to identify characteristics of an ideal after-school program, more students chose homework assistance than any other category. As one can see from the following chart, 47% of the students surveyed were able to finish their homework before going home from the SOS program, and reported *they probably wouldn't have if not in the program*.



STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM – SNAPSHOT

	I don't get my homework done	I finish my homework during SOS, but not otherwise.	I would get my homework done either way.
<i>Which best describes you?</i>	12%	47%	41%

Academic Assistance

Sites offered a variety of types of academic assistance, including one-on-one tutoring, group assistance and supervision, enrichment activities to support what the students were learning, and time to complete homework. The SOS administrative staff of the Department of Juvenile Justice worked with the Department of Public Instruction to make available training in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study to help staff plan activities that support the curriculum.

Computer Use

Student survey responses indicated that two thirds of participants used computers in the SOS program. According to interviews with program staff, many of these students don't have computers at home, and this was their only access to computers.



	Often	Once in a while	Rarely or never
<i>How often do you use computers in your after-school program?</i>	28%	36%	36%

EDSTAR found that students tend to use computers and the Internet more in programs that have secured enough machines to make them available to participants at all of their sites. Program participants accessed the Internet once a week or more in over 50% of the county SOS programs where computers were available at all sites. However, in county SOS programs where computers were not available at all sites, only 19% of the surveyed directors indicated that participants accessed the Internet more than once per week.

Field Trips

Trips that did not require extensive travel included visits to museums, plantations, hospitals, prisons, and factories. Other field trips included afternoon

One Rockingham seventh grade student commented about the field trips, "I thought it was a great experience. Later on in years I can look back and say I was a part of something special."

excursions to a bowling alley, skating rink, or shopping mall. A few students wrote that field trip experiences provided them with unique opportunities to learn a new skill or go places they would not otherwise be able to visit. In Davie

County, SOS students went camping and learned basic survival skills in the wilderness; many became CITs (counselors in training). Gaston County SOS students went to Washington, DC, where they volunteered at local soup kitchens. They prepared food and served hundreds of needy people in the area, and toured the Holocaust Museum and various government facilities. Gaston's

SOS students also took an end-of-summer trip to Myrtle Beach to relax and have fun.

Each site adopted a rest home, which they visited once a month. Students also worked with Hospice clients through a pen pal program, providing a valuable service to terminally ill patients who were often alone, discouraged, or in need of additional support. The students wrote letters, sent cards, and made gifts. – Rutherford County SOS

One activity that many county directors and program participants deemed to be an important aspect of the SOS initiative was community service. Community service projects involved, among other things, reading to elderly residents of a nursing home, picking up trash, planting flowers, working at a food bank, or collecting donations for a rescue mission. In Buncombe County, students from the SOS program worked with organizations that aid women and children who are displaced due to domestic violence, prison, job loss, etc. The students interviewed clients and staff while volunteering with the organizations. The entire project was documented on video, as students interviewed, kept journals, and took photographs. Their final video documentary will be shown at local Rotary clubs.

Behavior Modification

Nearly all of the SOS county programs used some kind of behavior modification system in their curriculum. Some examples of how SOS staff members attempted to modify program participants' behavior include the following:

- Students were asked to sign behavioral contracts.
- Group meetings were held to resolve issues.
- The time students could spend on computers and at recess was extended for good behavior.
- Courses in martial arts were taught to instill self-confidence and responsibility.

- Students were rewarded with certificates for improving grades or behavior.
- Points or tokens, often called “SOS bucks” or “club bucks,” were issued to students for positive attitude and behavior. Once a week or month, depending on the program, students could use the points or tokens to purchase items at an SOS “store” or to shop at an SOS auction.
- Students with regular attendance who remained on task and completed assignments were invited to weekly pizza parties; students who made academic gains or were on the honor roll were invited to bowling parties every six weeks; and students who had good or improved academics and behavior throughout the year were invited to participate in an end-of-the-year trip to an amusement park such as Busch Gardens.
- Staffs were extensively trained by Dr. Eaddy in various other behavior modification strategies to include a behavioral leadership model mentioned by several programs. This model gave the providers the skills to manage and influence any type of behavior toward a constructive end result.

Staff and Volunteers

Most SOS county directors have coordinated Support Our Students programs in their counties for more than two years.

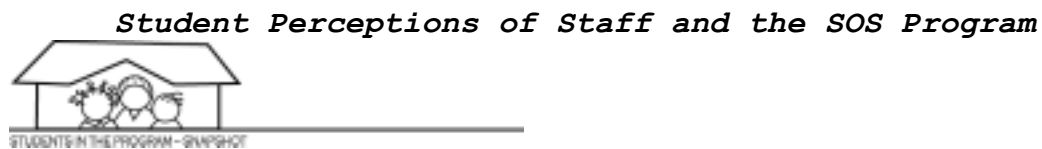
Number of Paid and Volunteer Staff

The number of staff members^{xiv} employed varied in each county program, as did the source of the money used to pay employees. The majority (61%) of the SOS county programs used at least one employee who was not paid with SOS funds. For example, Orange County used 30 staff members, but only 6 were paid with SOS funds; the additional staff members were paid by the Orange

County Public School System, a collaborator of the SOS program. Across the state, a total of 1,258 individuals worked in SOS county programs in school year 2001–2002, but only about two thirds of these staff members were paid with SOS funds.

Student Perceptions of Staff and the SOS Program

More than three quarters of the students surveyed agreed with the statement, “The staff is friendly.” Students in elementary school were slightly more inclined to agree with this statement than were middle school students. Less than 1 in 5 (17%) of those surveyed would *not* recommend the program to a friend.



	Strongly agree	Agree	No Opinion/	Do not	Strongly ree
<i>The staff is friendly.</i>	47%	31%	13%	4%	5%
<i>The after-school program is fun.</i>	45%	37%	14%	4%	0%
<i>I would recommend the program to a friend.</i>	49%	22%	12%	17%	0%

In addition to using paid staff, 95 county programs received the free labor of volunteers who tutored, supervised activities, presented special topics, and helped raise funds. Many volunteers came from organizations that performed community service, such as churches or the Junior League. The average number of volunteers in a week was eight; however, the range was large. While most counties had fewer than 10 volunteers per week, Ashe, Gaston, and Orange

county SOS programs all had more than 40 volunteers per week. **In an average week during the 2001–2002 school year, volunteers worked a total of 2,165**

150 people show up for the event. We organization in town. This was over Buncombe County SOS

hours. If SOS had paid \$15 per hour for this labor, the annual (school year) cost would have been over \$1.1 million.

Program Funding and Cost

The 98 county SOS programs evaluated by EDSTAR all received funding from the Department of

Juvenile Justice throughout the 2001–2002 school year. Grant awards ranged in size from \$60,000 to \$250,000 per year. Some counties received additional mini-grants for summer programs.

Because of volunteer labor, and additional sources of revenue, the cost per student per hour paid by the State of North Carolina through the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide after-school services for one student was \$2.94. Wilkes County's 29¢ per student per hour was the lowest cost in the state; the highest was \$18.06 in Yancey County. The average program served students at a cost, in SOS dollars, of about \$3.00 per hour, which was about 50¢ less than the state average for the 96 SOS county programs in operation throughout school year 2000–2001.^{xv} In general, counties with the lowest costs per student made the greatest use of in-kind donations and obtained more non-SOS grant monies. All of the programs provided homework assistance, cultural activities, and character-building activities. Many programs also provided one-on-one tutoring, and tutors were trained in the NC Standard Course of Study. Evaluators checked the price of private tutoring for school-age children in North Carolina,

and the price ranged from \$20 to \$37 per hour. So, even the most expensive cost per hour for SOS was far below the price of similar services – which the parents of most participants would not have been able to afford.

A total of 75 counties received additional, non-SOS funding from other grants and fundraising initiatives. These non-SOS grants came from such sources as the Americorp Fellowship Grant, Communities in Schools of North Carolina, the Governor's Crime Commission, JC Penny Golden Rule Grant, Learn and Serve America, the Mary Babcock Reynolds Foundation, the North Carolina Department of Social Services, Philip Morris – Positive Youth Development Initiative, RJR Foundation Grant, Safe Schools – Healthy Students, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative Grant, United Way, and the US Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. The additional revenue of \$4.7 million substantially increased the financial resources of the state's SOS initiative.

Aside from non-SOS grants, additional fundraising also came from soliciting contributions through bake sales, garage sales, and other creative products and events.

A substantial number (42%) of the county SOS programs charged a fee for services. This fee ranged from a one-time \$5.00 registration fee to \$6.00 per day, all on a sliding fee scale. These fees helped to cover various costs such as transportation and facility space rental, etc. Across the state, the total amount of revenue generated from charging students a fee was over half a million dollars. Ninety percent of the SOS county programs that charged a fee for services offered full scholarships to students who qualified. In some of the counties that offered full scholarships, partial scholarships were also available.

The value of in-kind contributions was estimated at \$2–3 million per year. In-kind contributions included free use of school facilities, utilities, computer and

audio/video equipment, and transportation. Some school districts (such as the Orange County School District) even paid the salaries of site coordinators and other SOS staff members.

Collaboration With Outside Agencies

SOS county programs collaborated with hundreds of agencies across the state to enhance the curriculum and improve the quality of the service provided. Collaborators included police departments, food banks, school systems, arts councils, libraries, US Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the North Carolina Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, the North Carolina Department of Social Services, health departments, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services (4-H), YMCAs, YWCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, housing authorities, United Way, Lions Club, museums, municipal governments, Governor's Crime Commission, Red Cross, Communities in Schools, area universities, local churches, Mother Read Program, Governor's One on One Program, the North Carolina Department of Mental Health, Learn and Serve America, Adolescent Enrichment Council, Hospice, and the March of Dimes.

A good relationship with the local school districts was a critical factor in the success of SOS county programs. For many SOS county programs, another important collaboration was with the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.

Beneficial and Effective Practices

Training & Support

Several counties reported benefiting from specific training provided by trainers in areas of activities, educational relationships, understanding the human psyche and leadership influence. The county programs note consistent outcomes as a result of these training opportunities. Primarily, SOS staff along with the contracted position with North Carolina State University's Youth Development (cooperative extension) provided training in the area of program development and local program marketing and support.

The DJJDP arranged through a conference grant for program providers to attend training offered by Dr. Larry Martel from the National Academy of Integrative Learning. In this training Dr. Laurence Martel, a Doctor of Education and former Director of Syracuse University's Center for learning shared various teaching and information sharing strategies and techniques. This training was designed to help providers understand how often times, simple adjustments in presentation as well as environment unlock the secrets to productive & successful learning for kids.

Tom Heck a former teacher and certified trainer was also hired through another grant to teach experiential education techniques to program providers in an effort to keep kids from ever nearing boredom during program hours. It was also designed to give providers the skills of being able to teach any topic in ways that allow every child/ student to understand any topic matter. Ultimately, this training was to insure that the providers understood clearly the structure and standards for being able to "think outside of the box".

Additionally, Dr. Christopher Eaddy a licensed master practitioner of NeuroLinguisticProgramming a former teacher and principal provide ongoing training in leadership, and “Developing High Performance – Zero Failure Relationships in schools (and with school aged youth). He focused a great deal of training time on Communication & Learning Modalities as a way to increase learning confidence, produce higher academic productivity in youth and to teach providers and volunteers how to effectively connect with young people. And, to test the effectiveness of the techniques and strategies curriculum, Dr. Eaddy chose eight pilot sites that he provided at least 4 to 5 additional specialty trainings for them- the test sites include: Alamance, Bladen, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Onslow, and Wake. Their overall results can be noted in the county evaluation tables.

Evaluation Outcomes

Academic Achievement Results

End-of-Grade Scores

NC EOG scores were examined to determine the following: **1)** whether SOS participants improved their EOG scores; **2)** whether grade-level differences were observed; **3)** whether more students scored at or above grade level; **4)** whether demographic factors affected improvement; and **5)** whether participants continued to improve over time. The results showed that in every grade except sixth, students made greater academic improvement than goals set by the state; more students scored at grade level or above; and **students who participated multiple years made steady progress, at a constant rate, each year.** This academic progress may be because participants were supervised, had homework assistance, had one-on-one tutoring if needed, and were fed healthy snacks – as opposed to being unsupervised and alone after school, as many students reported they would be without SOS.

EOG Score Improvement

North Carolina EOG scale-score results were analyzed by grade level for SOS participants to compare their reading improvement against state EOG improvement goals. These analyses showed that for middle school participants who attended SOS at least 30 days, the average improvement in all grades except sixth exceeded the year-over-year EOG improvement goals set by the NC Department of Public Instruction.



EOG Scale-Score Reading Improvement		
	State Goal	SOS Participants
Grade 5	4.3	5.6
Grade 6	2.9	1.4
Grade 7	2.9	7.3
Grade 8	2.7	7.4

Results showed that sixth graders made the least improvement in both reading and math, and this was the only grade in which SOS participants made lower than expected improvement.^{xvi} This may be because coping with the transition between elementary and middle school is difficult for these students in light of current research that typically shows a major brain growth spurt that occurs around this age. These results are consistent with those from the 1999–2000 SOS Evaluation.

Students Scoring at Grade-Level Proficiency

Evaluators analyzed EOG results to determine whether more SOS participants scored at grade-level proficiency at the end of the 2001–2002 school year compared with the previous year.^{xvii} The following chart shows that the percentages of students who scored at grade-level proficiency increased in both math and reading.

[Another copy of this will be forwarded with the link]

The SOS programs with the greatest increases in percentages of participants who scored at grade-level proficiency (20% or more increase) on EOG reading were in the following counties:

- McDowell
- Yancey
- Stanly
- Camden
- Alamance
- Cleveland (38% increase, the highest of all the county programs)

The SOS programs with the greatest increases in percentages of participants who scored at grade-level proficiency (20% or more increase) on EOG math were in the following counties:

- Cumberland
- Camden
- Alexander
- Northampton
- Onslow
- Caswell
- Bladen (51% increase, the highest of all the county programs)

Demographic Groups

SOS is helping to close the gap between minority and majority student achievement in North Carolina. Minority SOS participants made significantly greater improvements than White students in both math and reading.

African Americans made greater gains in EOG reading scores compared with every other ethnic group. This was statistically significant ($p < .0001$). This was true overall, and when controlling for other factors, such as baseline achievement levels and risk factors.

Combining all minority groups and comparing their EOG reading scale-score gains with those of White students showed that minority SOS participants made nearly twice the gain of White students.

Hispanic participants made the greatest gains in EOG math scores, followed by African Americans. These differences were statistically significant ($p < .01$), but not nearly as great as the differences observed in reading scores.

The average yearly improvement in EOG scores for students participating in SOS was almost half a proficiency level. More than two thirds of three-year SOS participants have improved two proficiency levels.

How Much Does SOS Help With Schoolwork?

Of the homework assistance offered at SOS, math tutoring seems to offer the greatest benefit to students. Interestingly, on EDSTAR surveys, *no* students said that assistance with reading or language arts helped “a lot,” yet 85% said that it helped “some.” The large percentage of students who reported that the assistance was helpful in reading may suggest that more appropriate, targeted assistance in that area may be especially helpful. In any given subject, less than 20% of students responding said that homework assistance was “no help.”

The following chart summarizes students' perceptions of homework assistance:



How much does homework assistance help in...	lot	some	little	
<i>Math</i>	49%	26%	14%	11%
<i>Work habits</i>	43%	25%	14%	18%
<i>Other subjects</i>	39%	27%	18%	16%
<i>Reading/language arts</i>	0%	85%	15%	0%

Elementary school students tended to give more credit to the SOS program for helping them academically than did middle school students.

Classroom teachers reported that more than 40% of the regularly attending participants improved their grade in English and/or math.

Behavioral Outcomes

Potentially as important as any other measure is changes in students' behavior and their perception of school. The SOS program has some particularly noteworthy results in this area, as detailed in the following sections.

Changes in Participants' Feelings Toward School

On the survey, about half the students indicated that their feelings about school had changed during the year (since joining SOS). Within this subgroup of students whose opinions about school had changed, the percentage of students who said they liked school more than they did before enrolling in SOS was

roughly *six times* greater than the percentage of students who said they liked school less than before the program started. This is a tremendous result for any school-related program, independent of all the other positive news for SOS.

Suspension Data

The percentage of middle school SOS participants receiving out-of-school suspensions decreased as compared to their previous year in school (from 13% to 8%), as did the percentage of in-school suspensions. As children get older, they generally receive *more* suspensions for behavior, not fewer, since stricter standards are applied to older students – so any decrease is especially noteworthy.

School Attendance

Students reported that they liked school more, in general, after joining SOS. This may have helped to increase their attendance at school, as overall, school attendance improved for participants. Fewer students were chronically absent from school in 2001–2002 (7%) compared with their attendance the previous year (9%).

Program Highlights

More than four fifths (82%) of the students who were surveyed by EDSTAR agreed with the statement, “The after-school program is fun.” Similarly, approximately three fourths (71%) of the students surveyed agreed with the statement, “I would recommend the program to a friend.” When students were asked in an open-ended question to identify the best thing about

Ross was in the SOS program during seventh and eighth grade and was impressed with the dedication and help he received from SOS staff, and the one-on-one attention he received from his Students of Promise mentors. As an eleventh grader, Ross joined the ranks of Students of Promise and volunteered more than 100 hours in the SOS program after October. SOS participants identified with Ross and loved having him as their “mentor.” Staff experienced a certain satisfaction watching Ross give to others what so many people had given to him. (Success story from Rockingham County.)

SOS, more students identified homework assistance and academic help than any other category.

*When he began attending SOS, "Philip" was a shy
With*

At SOS he benefited from interactions with other

continually looked for ways to get involved and

*ming to SOS to volunteer his time. His mother believes he would have had a much harder time adjusting to the move were it not for SOS. She and staff members credit SOS with helpi
teenager. – SOS Director*

Ashe County's SOS program had an eighth grader with a social disorder. "Damon" kept to himself and talked to no one, simply sitting and staring at the walls. When SOS hosted a 4-H Teen Retreat Camp, and staff announced they would be taking youth from the program, Damon's face lit up. He met the conditions set and was able to attend. In the three days of the retreat Damon made great strides toward coming out of his shell. He got involved in several activities, participating in enough dance lessons to learn several dances. He was the first to arrive at the Saturday night dance. He danced several dances with the girls and even asked the director for a dance. Damon excitedly talked about the fun he had and the new friends he made during his breakthrough weekend. (Ashe County success story.)

As in previous years, male students who took the EDSTAR survey were more than three times as likely as female respondents to indicate that the best thing about SOS was sports, games, or the opportunity to use a gymnasium. Female respondents were almost twice as likely as male respondents to indicate that the best thing about SOS having a place to go where there were friends and people to help them with homework.

Elementary school students were more than twice as likely as middle school students to say that the best thing about the program was that it was

fun, or something "cool" to do. Consistent with previous years, elementary students also tended to value homework assistance and academic help more than middle school students did. Middle school students reported on surveys that

they enjoyed SOS because it was a fun place where they could be with their friends.

Recommendations

Although most of the SOS county programs are achieving their goals, and anyone would agree that the SOS staff and its leadership are doing an outstanding job, there are always ways to improve a program. Following are some specific recommendations by EDSTAR based on its analysis of the available data.

Provide science and technology enrichment. North Carolina is going to begin testing science proficiency. Many of the rural counties do not have sufficient resources or teachers for high quality science teaching. SOS programs should begin planning how they might support students to help them learn science. SOS might consider collaborating with North Carolina State University's The Science House, which provides outreach to public schools in North Carolina to support science teaching. State-level SOS staff should consider sharing the program's successful academic results with agencies that support science enrichment, and offer to collaborate and accept their support in the future. This would help the "trickle-down" of science enrichment to county-level programs.

Collaborate with schools to offer special reading services during the after-school program. EDSTAR has analyzed some of the data for schools that have collaborated with after-school programs to provide special reading services for low performing students during this time instead of pulling them from class. Not only does this lower or remove the social stigma of receiving these services, but students then do not miss class time to receive the services. Analyses of reading progress made by students served during after-school time compared with students in the same schools who were served during school time showed that those served after school made more improvement in their EOG reading scores. The difference was statistically significant, and was true for students overall, but the subgroups of students receiving free/reduced-price lunch and

minority students made the greatest gains after school, as compared with comparable students served during school.

Add program elements to help sixth graders. There is some evidence that one reason for lack of success with improving sixth graders' achievement may be the transition to middle school and physiological changes that affect brain development. Educators have documented that sixth and ninth grade students have difficulty with the transition to a new school, and this often causes problems unique to these grades. SOS staff could add program components designed to help sixth graders with this difficult transition and the growth element.

Seek out other funding sources. SOS staff must find additional grants to obtain the funds they need to offer more activities and widespread services. SOS has concrete evidence that it is a successful program, is cost effective, and a much-needed service across North Carolina. Directors should more actively seek funds, using the high level of accountability and proven success to attract more funders.

Expand program into all counties and across all counties. In light of budget cuts this program is making a difference across North Carolina. Through advocacy and results marketing SOS must begin to make its helpful appearance at many more sites than it currently operates. In many cases the need is great as some of the current sites are bursting at the seams and need more resources to expand due to the increasing number of referrals.

Develop a stronger presence in the elementary schools. Because the middle school aged child needs the most support emotionally, socially, academically, physically etc. the administrative founders of the programs opted to begin the program by targeting middle school aged youth. There is growing evidence that the earlier grades getting this kind of support could begin to really

impact the academic progress of North Carolina. The development of more programs at the elementary level could be the key.

Notes

ⁱ For references and resources regarding juvenile crime, see <http://www.ncjrs.org/>, the Justice Information Center Web site, maintained by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service.

ⁱⁱ Gordon Whitaker, Executive Summary for *After-School Program Handbook: Strategies and Effective Practices*, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Center for Urban and Regional Studies, November 1998.

ⁱⁱⁱ An-Me Chung, *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*. The US Department of Education, p. 1, June 2000.

^{iv} North Carolina's Crime Control and Prevention Act of 1994, General Statutes, Article 3, Chapter 143 B.

^v Some SOS county programs are headed by executive directors, while others are headed by program directors. In this report we used the term "county director" to identify the person responsible for program implementation in each county.

^{vi} Howard N. Snyder and Melissa Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*, National Center for Juvenile Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, p. 64, September 1999.

^{vii} An-Me Chung, *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*. The US Department of Education, p. 1, June 2000.

^{viii} Bureau of Labor Force Statistics, *Employment Characteristics of Families*, Table 4., "Families with own children: Employment status of parents by age of youngest child and family type, 2000-01 annual averages," US Department of Labor, 2001.

^{ix} American Psychological Association, *Violence and Youth: Psychology's Response*, Vol. 1: Summary Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, Washington, DC, 1993.

^x North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Division of Accountability Services/Research, "Middle School Risk Behavior: 1995 Survey Results," Raleigh, NC, 1996.

^{xi} Thomas P. Rugg, "Middle School Students at Risk: What Do We Do with the Most Vulnerable Children in American Education?" *Middle School Journal*, vol. 24, no. 5, (May 1993), pp. 10-12.

^{xii} J.G. Ross, et. al., *Journal of Community Psychology*, OSAP special issue, "1992 The Effectiveness of an after-school program from primary grade latchkey students on precursors of substance abuse," pp. 22-38, 1992.

^{xiii} U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs*, p. 3, April 2000.

^{xiv} The statistics in this section of the report pertain to number of staff *members*, not staff positions.

The number of staff positions was often less than the number of staff members, as sometimes two or more staff members would be responsible for one staff position.

^{xv} For EDSTAR's methodology used to calculate cost/student/hour in SOS dollars, see endnote 7.

^{xvi} This may be because sixth grade is a transition year, and coping with transition may impede academic improvement.

^{xvii} Data for 10,740 students for whom evaluators had all data, and who had participated at least 30 days in SOS, were used in these analyses.